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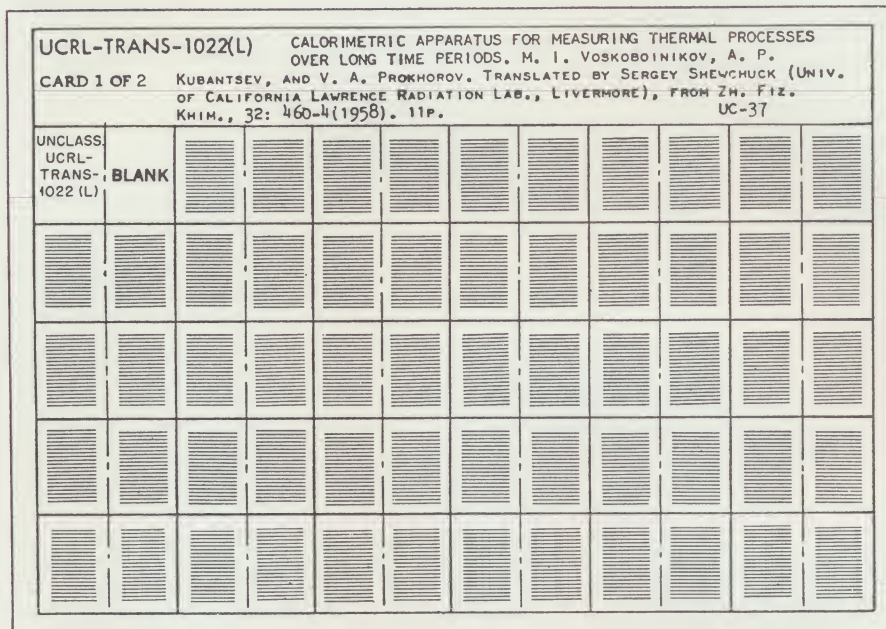
and other government and industrial  
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## Microfiche Standards Adopted

Three government agencies adopt standards to speed up, simplify dissemination of R&D reports



**MICROFICHE.** Up to 60 pages of a printed report can be reproduced in microform on a microfiche. The first few blanks, though, will be used for code numbers

Users of government R&D reports have had things made a bit easier for them. Three government agencies have standardized a microfiche system which will make the dissemination and use of these reports faster and simpler. And the agencies themselves will be able to cut costs.

The three agencies—Atomic Energy Commission, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and Department of Defense—will each have switched over to the new system by the early autumn. In operation, microfiche (negative cards containing documents in micro form) will be used to reproduce all R&D reports from the agencies and their contractors. DOD's documents will actually be handled by the Office of Technical Services of the Department of Commerce. AEC, NASA, and DOD turn out more than 90% of the scientific and technical reports sponsored by the Government.

While microfiche itself is not new, the standards agreed to by each agency make for more efficient use of microfiche. All reports produced by the agencies or their contractors are first

microfilmed. The images of the individual pages are arranged on a 105 mm. by 148 mm. (about 4" by 6") negative—the microfiche. Each microfiche card can contain up to 60 pages. The three agencies have not only agreed to the outside dimensions but to other standard dimensions as well—spacing between pages, reduction ratio, and others. These standards make it possible for documents from the three agencies to be viewed and reproduced by the same equipment, using identical viewing screens and projection lenses.

Microfiche provides other advantages:

- Limited quantities can be economically reproduced from the original microfiche.
- Microfiche can be reproduced at relatively low cost as compared with reproducing full size documents.
- Microfiche is tailor-made for compact storage and fast retrieval.

Prior to this changeover, each agency used its own system. NASA

used microfiche, but with outside dimensions of 5" by 8". AEC originally used a 3" by 5" opaque microcard; OTS used microfilm. Each agency also distributes full size documents.

Each of these systems had its drawbacks. AEC's microcards were difficult to reproduce; OTS's microfilm was hard to index and created retrieval problems. While NASA's 5" by 8" microfiche did not present these problems it was still not compatible with the other two agencies' systems.

Early in 1963 NASA and AEC set out to remedy the situation. Both agencies agreed to various standards for microfiche. Although internal dimensions were identical, AEC used a 3" by 5" microfiche and NASA a 5" by 8" microfiche. Later a standard 4" by 6" microfiche was agreed on.

In the spring of 1963, the Committee on Scientific Information of the Federal Council for Science and Technology considered the NASA-AEC standard for government-wide adoption. The Federal Council soon after adopted the standard. DOD and OTS also readily agreed to adopt the standard. OTS, which handles sales of government research and development documents to the public, in May of this year was given responsibility of disseminating DOD's reports.

The microfiche system also benefits each agency. AEC, for example, sends out 4 to 6 tons of mail a day. And total mailings are going up at a rate of 20% per year. Thus whenever microfiche can be mailed to a user rather than a printed copy, AEC saves money.

Another saving, in space, results from use of microfiche. About 10,000 microfiche can be stored in 250 inches of 4" by 6" file drawer space. This number of full size documents would take 300 feet of shelf space.

NASA will undergo the least change because of the new system—simply by switching from a 5" by 8" microfiche to a 4" by 6" microfiche. This relatively simple change, though, will save the agency 2 cents per card, amounting to more than \$70,000 a year.

OTS, which is only trying to break even, will pass on its savings to the user. Previously OTS charged 80 cents for a microfilmed document of 1 to 20 pages, three cents additional for each page over 20. Microfiche copies will sell for 50 cents the first sheet (containing up to 57 pages) and 25 cents for each additional sheet.

(over)

OTS, though, does not expect to sell many microfiche. Its sales to the public have always involved mainly printed copies of documents. And, although some microfiche will be distributed to DOD locations and contractors, OTS expects the bulk of its requests to be for printed copies.

This is a problem that faces all three agencies. To make the microfiche system work as well as it should, the number of printed documents distributed by the agencies should be kept to a bare minimum. However, many users prefer a printed copy to a microfiche.

AEC will urge its users to use microfiche by sending printed copies only when specifically requested to do so. The equipment to read microfiche, though, can stand some improvement. And it seems unlikely that microfiche will completely replace the printed document even when this equipment is available.